

Responsive Reading

Psalms 37:28; 73:24; 121:7; John 10:27-29;
Luke 12:32

**For the LORD loveth judgment, and
forsaketh not his saints.**

They are preserved for ever.

**Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and
afterward receive me to glory.**

The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil:

He shall preserve thy soul.

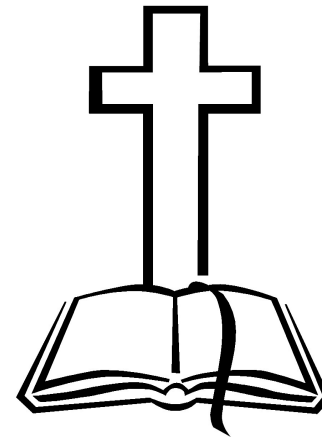
My sheep hear my voice, and I know them,
and they follow me.

**And I give unto them eternal life; and they
shall never perish, neither shall any man
pluck them out of my hand.**

My Father, which gave them me, is greater
than all; and no man is able to pluck them
out of my Father's hand.

**Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's
good pleasure to give you the kingdom.**

Worship Service



God Strengthens

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"God Strengthens"

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Closing Prayer

Unfolding a Rose

Author Unknown

It is only a tiny rosebud,
A flower of GOD'S design;
But I cannot unfold the petals
With these clumsy hands of mine.
The secret of unfolding flowers
Is not known to such as I.
GOD opens this flower so sweetly,
When in my hands they fade and die.
If I cannot unfold a rosebud,
This flower of GOD'S design,
Then how can I think I have wisdom
To unfold this life of mine?
So I'll trust in Him for His leading
Each moment of every day.
I will look to him for His guidance
Each step of the pilgrim way.
The pathway that lies before me,
Only my Heavenly Father knows.
I'll trust Him to unfold the moments,
Just as He unfolds the rose.

"God Strengthens"

Opening Prayer:

Dear Father God, we thank You for Your kindness and Your mercy. We come together this day as sheep in Your fold. Look upon us with Your love and Your forgiveness. By Your grace we approach Your Throne to ask You to forgive us our many sins. Holy Christ, we are grateful for Your Presence in our midst. We love You and we need You. Minister to us now by Your Holy Spirit we pray. Amen.

Devotion:

Text: *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."*
2 Timothy 4: 16-17

Often, we feel deserted and betrayed by others. Paul certainly felt this way. He is writing this letter to Timothy, a beloved student. From a dark, damp, cold Roman prison cell, Paul probably awaits imminent execution. During the trial he had no one to help him defend himself before the Emperor. The charge, the verdict, and the sentence were unjust. He was looking at having to pay with his head for trying to help folks avoid hell! And he was just being obedient to what the Lord had called him to do! Think about it... after all Paul had done for so many people...and how faithfully he had served Jesus for all those years! Now he was facing the prospects of execution for it. If anyone ever had a reason to get mad at God, Paul did. BUT, instead of getting mad at God, he leaned more heavily upon Him. And what did the Lord do? Commute the death sentence? Destroy the Emperor? Confuse Paul's accusers? Help Paul escape from prison? No. What DID the Lord do? **He stood with Paul**, because Paul kept his heart open to Jesus. Paul loved Jesus. And he never stopped loving

"God Strengthens" continued

Jesus, no matter what. It was a great encouragement to Paul for him to know the King of kings stood beside him as he faced the whim of the Emperor of Rome!

And what else did the Lord do? **He strengthened Paul!** The God of the universe not only kept Paul company through his trial, He also gave him the possession of strength inside, of personal fortitude, of supernatural calm in the storm!

Oh! How often this is unlike our response to the troubles of life! We're subject to get upset with God and everyone around us if things get too bad. But, like Paul, when we lean on Jesus in the storm, when we call on Him, instead of blame Him, He always comforts us with the reassurance of His presence and with the strength to keep our peace and joy in the thick of it all. This is not theory or cold theology. This is not fables and dreams. The experience of His strength imparted to us is real and vital and available to us all, all the time, by the presence of His Holy Spirit in our life! May we be evermore encouraged to seek the Lord, not run from Him. May we not blame God in our trials and get bitter toward Him. Oh, if we could talk to Paul now, I'm sure he would say it was worth it all.

Closing Prayer:

Our Father in Heaven, You know our struggles, our disappointments, our aches and pains. In the face of our weaknesses, let us live in the power of Your Holy Spirit within us. Let us walk with You and talk with You. Grant that we trust You and obey You. And, as we call on You to strengthen us, please grant that we be agents of Your encouragement and care to our neighbors and friends who live with us in this home. Help us to share with others right here in this facility the love and the forgiveness You so generously pour upon us. This we pray in the precious Name of Jesus. Amen.